

15-percent rate bracket, and earned income credit and to allow the non-refundable personal credits against regular and minimum tax liability, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBER TO MEXICO-UNITED STATES INTER-PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, and pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 276h, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following Member of the House to the Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Group:

Mr. KOLBE of Arizona, Chairman.
There was no objection.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain 1-minute requests.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BILIRAKIS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE NET CORPS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. HONDA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to come to the House floor to speak about legislation I introduced last week, the National Education Technology Corps Act of 2001, or better known as NET Corps.

As a former science teacher, principal and school board member, I am extraordinarily pleased that Congress is becoming more engaged in the plight of our schools. Much of the discussion centers on how the Federal Government can be more creative and how we can meet the needs of our schools. I agree that we do need to be more creative, and I am confident that the Net Corps Act is as intelligent and innovative as the backers, the high-tech industry, educators, and nonprofits.

Representatives from each of these sectors recently attended a press conference in San Jose where they voiced their support for this bill and efforts to improve our education system. I crafted this bill in the spirit of the Peace Corps and Americorps, programs that are based on the premise that American citizens of all backgrounds have something constructive to offer underfunded and underserved communities.

It is a shame that in America we must classify our schools as underfunded. As a member of the Committee on the Budget, I argue that it is a sad statement about our national values when our schools cannot offer our children the tools that will prepare them for the information economy.

I often talk about accountability. No, not just teacher accountability, but also about holding our political institutions accountable for inadequately serving our schools. I am discouraged by the Republican budgetary earmarks for education. The vote today only reinforces how necessary it is for advocates of schools to be creative.

NET Corps is creative and it is smart. The NET Corps program, an expansion of the Corporation for National Service, will recruit high-tech savvy volunteers from academic institutions and high-tech companies. I am particularly excited by the inclusion of the high-tech companies in the NET Corps.

The reality is that many high-tech companies already have organized programs and efforts to help our schools. Companies like 3Com and Silicon Graphics, Intel and Hewlett-Packard come immediately to mind. NET Corps rewards these companies for their efforts by providing them a 20 percent tax credit on the time their employees have spent in schools working directly with teachers and school administrators. But NET Corps is not about rewarding companies who are already active; it is about enticing engaged companies to lend their employees to help our children. High-tech companies are receptive to this legislation because they understand that the future of America's IT economy rests on their ability to attract qualified workers.

I am pleased to be joined in my effort by my distinguished colleague, the gentleman from California (Mr. HORN). The gentleman from California (Mr. HORN), as a former president of the California State University at Long Beach, understands the great challenges our schools and children face, and he recognizes that NET Corps better prepares teachers to address these challenges. I am proud to have him as a cosponsor, and I look forward to working with him to pass this important legislation.

Finally, let me say that since introducing this legislation, I have been contacted by countless high-tech employees, teachers, and parents who support this legislation. They are part of what I call the NET Corps movement.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in this movement. Our children's futures depend upon it.

BLACK BERETS FOR U.S. ARMY SHOULD BE MADE IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to once

again bring attention to the issue of the decision by the Army Chief of Staff to issue black berets as standard issue head gear to all Army personnel. Until this decision was made, the black beret had been the outward symbol of the Army Rangers, one of the most elite fighting forces within the United States armed services. While much has been said regarding the decision, I believe that even more needs to be said, particularly regarding the decision to bypass the Barry amendment and purchase the bulk of the berets totaling nearly \$35 million from Communist China.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when the small businesses of our Nation are struggling for new business, it is a travesty that our own government has chosen to bypass the Buy American Rule in order to meet an arbitrary deadline. While the 225th birthday of the United States Army should be marked with great celebration, I do not believe that the men and women who so faithfully serve in the Army would want the day marked by having to wear a beret that says "Made in China."

I recently received a letter written by a small businessman from Sanford, North Carolina, and I will submit this letter for inclusion in the RECORD.

Mr. Brooks Pomeranz is president of Cascade Fibers Company, a small mill that in a matter of a few short months could convert its cutting and sewing operation into a mill that could have produced at least a part of the beret order for the United States Army. He writes, and I quote him: "With the decline of U.S. textiles and U.S. textile mills closing every month, it is unconscionable that our government is contracting foreign companies to manufacture these berets. With just a portion of this business being contracted to my company would enable us to keep 80 families from losing a vital income for their children. Our quality is outstanding and our service is superior. Eighty families, 80 moms, 80 dads and countless children whose livelihood would continue if this bill were given even a portion of the order for new berets. Instead, those berets will be made by men and women in China who work under the worst possible working conditions for merely pennies per day. The same men and women who are told that they are not allowed to worship as they please and who are told that they cannot have more than one child. And, at the center of all of this is the undeniable fact that United States tax dollars would go to a communistic government to be used for the purpose of weapons from our enemies to threaten and intimidate not only the people of the United States, but also our allies. This should concern all Americans."

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. MANZULLO) and the Committee on Small Business on the House side for holding next week's hearings on this issue, and I want to call on the House Committee